8:Campbell T-5 (no date) 1949 MH1 Iraq MH1

A MAN'S HONOUR IS IN THE

1539
577
538

HAIR OF HIS MOUSTACHE

On the morning after the night in which we had heard the story of Maqdad, we halted for breakfast near Mussayib. Hamed said: You heard the story of Maqdad and you heard how the Persian Prince said that a man's honour is in the hair of his moustache. Now this is a true proverb of the Fetla tribes and I will relate how this saying originated, though truly the Prince was a man without honour, for he shaved off his moustache. And Abed said: If you know the true facts of the origin of this proverb, then tell us the story.

P. 110

8:Campbell T-5 (no date) 1949 MH1 Iraq MH1

was no fear in her heart, for she knew that Abbas Ali el Qassab would die before he could marry her. And Kadhim sat watching his snares and thinking: How can I become a great merchant? Kadhim was so poor that he had not even a single copper coin in his pocket; he owned no shoes, he had no headcloth, he was not even wearing any vest or underclothes, and his only garment was his thob. And Kadhim decided: I will borrow money, and trade with my capital and become a great merchant.

Then Kadhim went to the town and he was walking in his bare feet, and he went to the shop of Abdul Rashid and saluted the merchant and said: Give me a roll of cloth and a loan of five gold liras and I will give you my pledge. And Abdul Rashid looked and he saw that the youth was dressed in a dirty and torn thob and that he was bareheaded and barefooted, but he saw that he carried his head like a hawk, so he said: You are, then, from the tribes? And Kadhim nodded and said: Yes.

Now, let it be known to you that the tribes were much poorer in the days of the Ottomans than they are today, for they were then unable to cultivate their land in peace and prosperity, and it often happened that it was necessary to celebrate a marriage or observe the rites of death when there was no money in the purse of the head of the house. Then would he go to the town and to a merchant and say: Give me cloth and money and take my pledge. And as for the pledge, if he had a gold or silver ring, he would give it, and if he had none then he would give his headcloth to the merchant, or even his riding switch, saying: This contains my honour. And when the pledge was given payment was always made, for this is the custom of the tribes.

Abdul Rashid Mejid looked at the youth Kadhim and

8:Campbell T-5 (no date) 1949 MH1 Iraq MH1

he saw that he was truly from the tribes, for his bearing was proud and his gaze the gaze of the peregrine falcon. So he said: Take the money and the cloth and give me your pledge. Then Kadhim's cheeks flushed red, for he had forgotten to bring a pledge with him, nor did he own a ring, and he had no headcloth and he owned no riding switch, for he had no horse. But his brain was quick and he thought and answered: Verily a man's honour is contained in the hair of his moustache, for it is his moustache that distinguishes his face from that of a woman or a boy. Therefore I shall give you one hair of my moustache as a pledge. And Abdul Rashid Mejid was astonished at the words of the youth.

Then Kadhim called for scissors and for a mirror, and he studied his face in the mirror and searched for a hair in his moustache which was less beautiful than the rest. And he found such a hair and snipped it off and gave it to Abdul Rashid Mejid. And Abdul Rashid Mejid took the hair and put it with the pledges, and he put it in a box with the rings and the headcloths and riding switches, and he gave Kadhim five gold liras and a roll of cloth.

Kadhim took the money and the cloth and he went to the shop of a tailor whom he knew and trusted, for the man's father was from the Fetla tribes. He said to the tailor: Take this cloth and this money and make me the clothes of a very rich merchant, and bring me a beard of sheep's wool which I will fasten to my face, and keep this a secret, for it is more important to me than life itself. And the tailor said: Cut my head to keep the secret. Then the tailor made for Kadhim the clothes of a wealthy merchant and he brought for him a beard of sheep's wool, and when Kadhim had put on the beard and put on the clothes he looked so important and distinguished that anyone who

X539 ONCE, in the days of Haroun er Rashid, Abu Nawas the friend and companion of the Commander of the Faithful was walking amongst the tents and reed huts of the poor people who lived on the outskirts of Baghdad, in search of amusement for his master. And as he was passing a tent he heard in it voices and they were raised in anger, and they were speaking in the slow tones of the people of the high desert, and Abu Nawas stopped to listen to their words.

X539 ● 577 And a man's voice was speaking and its tones were the tones of fury and it said: O daughter, you shall tell me the name of the man who is the father of this child, that I may kill him and I may kill you and our name may be again among the honourable. And a girl's voice answered and said: O my father, verily there was no man. Know you that one night last winter I had gone to fetch water, and the ground was frosty and the night had the coldness of death, and I was trembling with cold and the fear of the night air, when I saw on the ground a man's cloak, and I picked it up and wrapped it around me and I became warm. But, alas, from the smell of that cloak there came in my stomach a child.

Abu Nawas thought: Verily this is an affair in which my master will be interested, for does he not take an interest in everything touching the welfare of his subjects? So Abu Nawas entered the tent, and he found there an old man whose face was creased in fury, and a young girl beautiful of the face who was weeping in a manner to turn the heart, and in the hand of her father was a dagger.

X539 Abu Nawas commanded the man to lay his dagger aside and he said: Know you that I am a high officer of the State, and to disobey my orders will lose you your head. There is much in this affair of interest to justice. Therefore

8:Campbell T-5 (no date) 1949 MH1 Iraq MH1

X539 IN the days of the Ottomans there was a wealthy merchant in Basra, and in God only is there belief. The name of the merchant was Mahmud, and his wealth exceeded that of all the merchants of Basra. He was rich with exceeding riches, and he had a wife like unto a star, for she was as graceful as the gazelle, her eyes were like spring pools in the desert, her skin was as delicate as rose petals, her breasts were as two ripe peaches towards which the hand desires to stretch, her waist was slender as a young sapling and her thighs were smooth and lovely. And in virtue she was beyond compare, for she was as the golden shelduck, who pairs only with her mate, and dies if she is deprived of him. The name of this girl was Leila, for she was born in the night, and she was in the seventeenth year of her life.

So Mahmud the Merchant had abundance of those things which make for pleasure in this world. Yet he was not happy nor were the great merchants and bankers his friends, for he was a miser greatly given to suspicion and
X539 doubt. His trade was a great trade and it was his custom
577 to go to the shroffs and bankers and he would give them bags of Turkish gold, saying: Here are two thousand Hamidiya liras. Give me their equivalent in Indian rupees or in Persian tomans. The great bankers would take the bag and put it with their gold without opening it or counting it, for this was the custom of men of honour. But when they gave a bag to Mahmud, saying: Take these twenty-five thousand rupees, Mahmud would open the bag and count out the rupees one by one, biting each coin to see that it was good. A crowd would collect to watch him, and the people would say: See how Mahmud counts the money. The banker must be a cheat or the merchant would not behave like this.